Neighborhood Associations and Urban Decision Making in Albuquerque

Karen N. King

Neighborhood associations have the potential to be important players in the urban decision-making process. There are numerous examples of situations in which they have exercised their unique capabilities to influence decisions that have a direct impact on their members. But their role in the larger arena of the city they inhabit is less clear. This study explores the degree to which neighborhood associations, through their newsletters, acknowledge and support citywide goals. A content analysis of 173 newsletters from forty-four neighborhood associations in Albuquerque, New Mexico, revealed that they do provide some support for several citywide goals but not for the majority of them.

As NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS, neighborhood associations have a leadership role to play in the urban decision-making process. To Douglas Yates (1977, p. 25), they are "the foot soldiers of the community in dealing with city government" and the "principal combatants in the many-sided contest of urban politics." Guest and Oropesa (1986, p. 567) see them as "permanent 'minutemen' to alert community residents to issues which require mass citizen lobbying." Writing in *Cities Without Suburbs,* David Rusk (1993, p. 130) conceives of them as "reserve army units" that "provide a framework for mass mobilization when a crisis occurs." Whichever metaphor one uses, neighborhood associations clearly provide a bridge between the sentiments of community members and political decision-making bodies. This article used content analysis techniques to explore the degree to which neighborhood associations in Albuquerque, New Mexico, use this potential to support city goals by examining association newsletters.

Numerous examples exist of situations in which neighborhood associations have exercised their boundary-spanning ability to influence urban decision making on issues that have a direct impact on the status of the neighborhoods themselves and on the residents living within their borders. The benefits these associations effect on behalf of their own neighborhoods are clear, but their role in the larger arena of the city they inhabit is less obvious. Studies indicate

 © Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

that neighborhood associations are not concerned about the long-term goals of the city or region of which they are a part, nor do the associations work in any substantial way to advance those goals (Peterson, 1981; Daykin, 1988; Price, 1992; Rusk, 1993). Berry, Portney, and Thompson (1993, p. 188), in their seminal study of neighborhood associations in five U.S. cities, conclude that "the neighborhood-oriented roles that citizens take on are far more prevalent than the roles available to them in addressing citywide issues." Speaking of Albuquerque, Price (1992, p. 119) has noted that "neighborhood groups have seldom organized to promote political candidates or lobby for city-wide planning initiatives."

Studies indicate that neighborhood associations are not concerned about the long-term goals of the city or region of which they are a part

Neighborhoods have several reasons to be concerned about what is happening outside their borders. To begin with, neighborhoods are not little cities that possess the political and economic resources to sustain themselves independently. They must look to the municipalities in which they exist for basic services such as police and fire protection, road construction and maintenance, animal control, and refuse collection. In addition, they are bound by city regulations and ordinances that prescribe land use, building construction, and utility service. Neighborhoods often depend on municipal funding for such improvements as roadside beautification, appropriate signage, and pollution control. In order to compete successfully for their share of the pie, neighborhoods need to be knowledgeable about how city and regional governments decide to allocate resources and how they provide services to their constituents.

In addition, neighborhoods need to be concerned about the overall health of the cities and regions in which they exist because they cannot expect to prosper unless the larger entities of which they are a part are doing well economically. A depressed city is not going to secure well-paying jobs with generous benefits for all its neighborhoods. Nor is a depressed city going to provide the quantity and quality of public services that make families want to reside in a particular neighborhood and commit time and effort to maintaining it. David Rusk (1993), former mayor of Albuquerque and a leading consultant on regional issues, has made a persuasive argument that suburbs need the cities with which they are associated geographically in order to prosper. The same may be said for neighborhoods: neighborhoods need the cities within which they are located to fulfill their residents' expectations of a safe, comfortable life for themselves and their families. Associated with the question of why neighborhoods should be concerned with municipal or regional goals is the question of what role neighborhoods can or should play in advancing city goals. Gustavo Mesch (1996), in his study of the determinants of collective action on local issues, collected surveys from 105 neighborhood associations in Columbus, Ohio. His findings shed some light on this question. Mesch points out that neighborhoods, through their associations, serve as channels of communication between their membership and outside entities. He also

suggests that neighborhood associations function as vehicles of social control in that they have the potential to reduce strife both within the neighborhood and between residents and outside factions.

Neighborhood associations also offer residents an opportunity to participate in making decisions that have a direct impact on their quality of life. Assessing the level of power inherent in community members' collective action, Sherry Arnstein (1969, p. 217) has described a "ladder of citizen participation" that has served urban scholars and activists well since 1969. This model has three stages (nonparticipation, degrees of tokenism, and degrees of citizen power) that Arnstein further defines with eight separate steps ranging from Step 1 (manipulations), in which citizens are token participants, to Step 8 (citizen control), in which citizens have real decision-making power over issues that directly concern them. Although this model was developed in the 1960s, when citizen empowerment was a rallying cry for community organizers, it may also explain the activities of Albuquerque neighborhood associations today.

Almost a quarter of a century later, Mary Timney's 1998 investigation into public policy development led to a model of citizen participation with relevance to this particular study. Although she was looking at the development of state energy policy, her model is also applicable at the local level. Timney identified three distinct examples that form a continuum from traditional agency-controlled citizen participation to citizen responsibility for policy development, with the public agency taking only an advisory role. In the traditional, or passive form, the agency excludes citizen input until the agency has completed its work; citizens have a very small role in this model. At the other end of the continuum, the active model gives the policy process to the public. In the middle is a hybrid form in which public participation is an administrative goal designed for building consensus, with administrators involving citizens as partners in developing recommendations but writing the final reports themselves.

This study seeks to determine to what degree neighborhoods demonstrate an awareness of themselves as part of the larger geographic, political, and economic units to which they are bound

This study seeks to determine to what degree neighborhoods demonstrate an awareness of themselves as part of the larger geographic, political, and economic units to which they are bound and to what extent they participate in advancing metropolitan goals. To explore this question, the researcher examined 173 issues of newsletters distributed by forty-five neighborhood associations in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Using key words and phrases, she studied each exhibit first for the purpose of developing a comprehensive list of issues of interest to neighborhood associations. She then compared this list with a 1998 document outlining the five-year goals for the city of Albuquerque to determine the extent to which neighborhood associations in Albuquerque support citywide goals. The goal of this comparison was to determine the ratio between the highly particularistic interests of neighborhood associations and their expressed concerns with broader municipal issues.

Neighborhood Associations

Although it is difficult to define a typical neighborhood association, most exist to maintain and improve the quality of neighborhood life and to protect common economic and social interests (Rich, 1980; Oropesa, 1992; Mesch and Schwirian, 1996). Community residents, both homeowners and commercial interests, join neighborhood associations for a variety of reasons. For some the motive is primarily social, but for the majority the goal is more instrumental: they want to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood through collective action (Jeffres and Dobos, 1984). Their main concerns revolve around land use or zoning, but they also address such community issues as enforcement of the housing code, street maintenance, and neighborhood safety (Oropesa, 1989). Strategies for achieving shared goals include conducting annual meetings, sponsoring athletic events, working with local governments to identify neighborhood problems and develop budget priorities for addressing them, providing direct services, and protecting property values (Herson and Borland, 1990).

David Horton Smith (2000, p. 269) classifies neighborhood associations as grassroots associations (GAs) because they are "locally based and basically autonomous, volunteer-run, nonprofit groups that have an official membership of volunteers." They typically have no paid employees and are usually nonhierarchical in organizational structure (Oropesa, 1995). They focus on serving members rather than the public. As in most GAs, leadership is key to the success of neighborhood associations (Smith, 2000). GAs' activities of tend to support participatory democracy, and "nearly every GA sometimes gets involved in public affairs/issues when they are relevant to continued GA existence and/or to specific GA goals" (Smith, 1997, p. 278).

In many cities neighborhood associations have become partners with municipal government. Formed by cities to systematize and institutionalize citizen input on a variety of urban issues, these neighborhood associations receive both material and symbolic support from local government units. To municipalities they can be "channels of communication, sources of legitimacy, vehicles of social control, and a means to organize and direct service" (Taub and others, 1977, p. 426). Since the 1970s the city of Columbus, Ohio, has worked to create a body of advisory neighborhood representatives to solve problems of representation and accessibility to the political process (Mesch and Schwirian, 1996). In a study of neighborhood associations in Vancouver and Jerusalem, Hasson and Ley (1997, p. 54) identified a similar kind of relationship in which "the state promoted a measured degree of decentralization and democratization in return for the integration of interest groups into the political system."

Neighborhood Associations in Albuquerque, New Mexico

A city of 670,000 people (Albuquerque Statistics, 1999), Albuquerque has witnessed tremendous growth in its economy and population since the end of World War II, driven primarily by building and land development. Described by journalist V. B. Price (1992, p. 5) as "a city at the end of the world," Albuquerque is home to a diverse citizenry composed primarily of Hispanics, Anglos, and Native Americans, with small African American and Asian communities. In addition, a federal presence is evident in Albuquerque, which is the home of Kirtland Air Force Base and Sandia National Laboratories.

A city of 670,000 people, Albuquerque has witnessed tremendous growth in its economy and population since the end of World War II, driven primarily by building and land development

The issues Albuquerque faces are common to similar Western cities: urban sprawl, environmental pollution, inadequate public transportation, crime, and a stressed public education system. Water usage problems are also common in this high-desert metropolis. Inevitably, conflicts among divergent points of view arise as local units of government struggle to address them. Recognized and encouraged by the city of Albuquerque, neighborhood associations provide a mechanism to solicit citizen input, especially on questions of land use.

The neighborhood association movement in Albuquerque began in the mid-1970s. In 1974 the city code formalized the relationship between neighborhood associations and the city of Albuquerque. The Office of Community and Neighborhood Coordination (OCNC) was formed in 1981, and the city passed an ordinance outlining its role in the recognition of neighborhood associations in 1987 (Community Training and Assistance Center, 1997; Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1987); this article will refer to this as the 1987 ordinance. Thus, within Albuquerque city government, the OCNC is the lead point of contact with neighborhood associations.

The 1987 ordinance lists several primary goals for supporting neighborhood associations. One is the early identification and resolution of potential conflicts between neighborhoods and the private sector, and another is the promotion of communication between neighborhoods and city government. Finally, the ordinance sees this recognized network of neighborhood associations as a way for land developers to coordinate major proposals and plans with local property owners.

The 1987 ordinance defines a *neighborhood association* as "an organized group of people or other legal entities that own or occupy real property within a specified subarea of the city" (Albuquerque, 1987). As of July 5, 2002, Albuquerque had 258 registered neighborhood associations, of which 184 were recognized by the OCNC. The OCNC also recognized eight coalitions of neighborhood associations. To gain the OCNC's recognition, a neighborhood association must file a current copy of its by-laws with the city, hold at least one

meeting per year, submit an annual report on the size of the active membership, and provide the OCNC with a list of current officers and board members. For legal and financial reasons, the Office of Community and Neighborhood Coordination encourages, but does not require, recognized neighborhood associations to become incorporated as nonprofit organizations in the state of New Mexico.

Such recognized neighborhood associations can comment on private developers' proposed projects, city-sponsored projects, and proposed regulatory changes that may have an impact on neighborhoods. The 1987 ordinance requires private developers and the city of Albuquerque to notify recognized neighborhood associations about their projects and associated hearings prior to applying to the city for public benefits or relief from certain regulations. An applicant's failure to contact, or make a reasonable attempt to contact, the appropriate neighborhood associations is considered grounds for a neighborhood association to request deferral of a hearing. In effect, the recognition process that the 1987 ordinance prescribes provides a vehicle for the orderly participation of citizens in the planning and development of Albuquerque.

Such recognized neighborhood associations can comment on private developers' proposed projects, city-sponsored projects, and proposed regulatory changes that may have an impact on neighborhoods

Goals for the City of Albuquerque

Neighborhood associations in Albuquerque are vitally concerned with regional development. Participating in communitywide planning allows them, through their representatives, to share their concerns in a public forum. In June and July 1998, Shared Vision convened two daylong meetings to bring together diverse representatives of the Albuquerque community for the purpose of identifying five-year goals for the city of Albuquerque. Approximately 120 people from many different organizations, including neighborhood associations, attended the Albuquerque Goals Forum, sponsored by Shared Vision, Inc. Shared Vision is a nonprofit organization that acts in the role of neutral convener to provide a bridge between municipal decision makers and the general public (Shared Vision, 1998).

The first day of the 1998 forum consisted of presentations about current community conditions. The second day was devoted to facilitating small group discussions of a vision statement, recommending goal areas and desirable future conditions. From these activities came seven goals for the city of Albuquerque to address in the next five years, not ranked in any particular order (Shared Vision, 1998):

- Sustainable community development
- Public systems
- Community building
- Economic vitality
- Human and family development
- Environmental protection and enhancement
- Public safety

The summary document was distributed to a wide range of community leaders, including elected officials and municipal employees.

The first goal, sustainable community development, encourages regional growth that protects the environment and creates livable, sustainable communities. Communities that are walkable and provide their residents with choices in housing and convenient services were identified as ways of realizing this goal.

Public systems, the second goal, seeks to assure that the city serves all existing communities in Albuquerque adequately and efficiently with sewer, storm, water, and road systems. An example of a service that could fulfill this goal is a multimodal regional transportation system that provides affordable urban transportation, thus reducing the number of private vehicle miles that residents travel.

Creating diverse jobs with livable wages and benefits will result in a skilled workforce that makes a positive contribution to the local economy

The third goal on the list is community building and seeks to foster community identity, pride, and cohesion. Included within this goal are the secondary goals of encouraging communities to be responsible for the community's well-being as well as offering residents opportunities to learn about and appreciate diverse culture.

The economic vitality goal aims to provide a vital economy in which businesses have opportunities for growth and all Albuquerque residents have the potential for increased wealth and a rising level of prosperity. Creating diverse jobs with livable wages and benefits will result in a skilled workforce that makes a positive contribution to the local economy.

The fifth goal, human and family development, is focused on providing multiple sources of support for development of human growth. Essential ingredients for achieving it include a quality educational system, recreational opportunities, affordable housing, and programs that encourage physical and mental health for citizens of all ages.

The goal of environmental protection and enhancement seeks to protect Albuquerque's natural environment. Water and land conservation, as well as reduction of environmental pollution, are essential for accomplishing this goal.

Public safety, the seventh and final goal, seeks to ensure communities in which residents feel safe, trust one another, and share responsibility for maintaining a safe environment. Community policing and crime prevention through education are ways of helping achieve this goal.

Methodology

The researcher selected newsletters put out by neighborhood associations in Albuquerque as the unit of analysis for examining to what extent neighborhood associations advance city and regional goals as nonprofit civic leadership groups. Newsletter distribution is important for neighborhood associations. Because newsletters can go out to a large number of people, they can be used as recruiting tools to

bring new residents into the organization (Oropesa, 1995). They can serve as an avenue of communication between the association leadership and neighborhood residents (Rich, 1980). They invite residents to attend special events and become involved in neighborhood activities. In Oropesa's words (1995, p. 236), neighborhood association newsletters "assist in turning residents into members and members into participants." By fostering neighborhood cohesion, they set the stage for organized action on behalf of shared goals. Because they are free from external editorial oversight, their contents can suggest what issues, both inside and outside their boundaries, are genuinely important to the neighborhoods themselves.

The researcher examined 173 issues (or exhibits) of neighborhood association newsletters published in the years 1995 to 2000 for this study (see Table 1). These newsletters represented forty-five neighborhood associations in the Albuquerque metropolitan area. This number is considerably lower than the number of neighborhood associations that the Office of Community and Neighborhood Development recognized (282 at the time of the study). Why the discrepancy? One explanation is that only a minority of neighborhood associations actually put out regular newsletters, and those that do may not archive them. Another limitation is that not all association leaders whom the researcher asked to send copies did so. Some

Table 1. Neighborhood Associations and Number of Exhibits

Neighborhood Association	*Exhibits*	*Neighborhood Association*	*Exhibits*
Academy North	2	Matthew Meadows	3
Antelope Run	2	N. Albuquerque Acres	6
Barelas	2	Netherwood Park	11
Bear Canyon	4	New Kimo	3
Bel-Air	7	Nob Hill	2
Boyds-Leslie Park	7	North Hills	5
Cibola	4	Paradise Hills	4
Crestview Heights	3	Parkland Hills	1
Elder Homestead	10	Rincon Loop	9
Enchanted Meadows	2	Rio Grande Boulevard	1
Fair Heights	2	S. R. Marmon	10
Fair West	1	San Jose Community	7
Five Points	1	Sky View Acres	4
Green Woods	1	Stardust Skies North	1
Heritage East	1	Stardust Skies Park	2
Heritage Hills	4	Sycamore	1
Highland Merchants	5	Tanoan Estates	3
Hodgin	5	Trails-Seven Bar South	4
J. B. Robert	1	University Heights	3
Kachina Hills	4	Vineyard Estates	1
La Luz	11	Wells Park	1
Las Terrazas	1	Zia Gardens	9
Laurelwood	2		

Note: Number of exhibits = 173.

associations submitted back copies as well as current ones; therefore, the final number of 173 newsletters analyzed does not represent an identical number of neighborhood associations.

The final sample included newsletters from the northwest, southwest, northeast, and southeast quadrants of the city; the dividing line for north and south Albuquerque is Central Avenue (once known as Old Route 66) and for east and west Albuquerque is Broadway Boulevard. The percentage of newsletters, that is, the number of newsletters from different associations divided by the total number of registered associations, was similar for three of the four divisions: northwest, 12 percent; northeast, 16 percent; and southeast, 19 percent. However, just three newsletters in the sample (.05 percent) were from the southwest quadrant (the South Valley), considered to be the poorest and most Hispanic section of Albuquerque (Carillo, 1993). That South Valley neighborhood associations produce relatively few newsletters compared with the rest of the city may be explained in part by Oropesa's observation (1995, p. 250) in his study of human resource mobilization in Seattle, Washington, that "The modal type of association in high property values areas is a representative democracy with a newsletter; the modal type of associations in areas with low property value is a participatory democracy without a newsletter." Because a regular newsletter is typically the single largest expense of neighborhood associations, their production by South Valley groups may not be feasible given the size of these groups' budgets.

However, just three newsletters in the sample (.05 percent) were from the southwest quadrant (the South Valley), considered to be the poorest and most Hispanic section of Albuquerque

These neighborhood association newsletters were varied. A few were as brief as one side of a sheet of paper; others ran from eight to ten pages. Some were sophisticated in content and production; others were quite simple. Most were copied on white or colored paper, but one was obviously printed on a color printer. Despite the fact that Albuquerque has a large Hispanic population, only one newsletter had every article and announcement in Spanish as well as in English. Virtually every newsletter had information about how nonmembers could join the association as well as a plea for members to become volunteer board members or block captains.

The researcher used a content analysis methodology to determine the degree to which neighborhood associations demonstrate awareness of themselves as part of a larger political entity and the extent to which they participate in advancing city goals. *Content analysis* is "any technique for making references by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (Hosti, 1969, p. 14). One can apply it to nearly any form of communication, but one always performs it on the message, not on the sender or receiver. Because of the brevity and informality of the exhibits in the sample, the researcher chose to use a semantic form of content analysis, which involves examining key words and phrases, rather than a syntactic form, which focuses on the relationship among the components in the message.

To ensure consistency in analyzing this collection of neighborhood association newsletters, the researcher used a form specifically designed to code the contents of the newsletters and of the citywide goals. She then carefully read each newsletter to determine whether it included words and phrases about the issues that researchers have identified as being typical of neighborhood association newsletters: safety, land use, streets, schools, housing, and neighborhood beautification (Oropesa, 1989; Mesch and Schwirian, 1996; Rich, 1980; Mesch, 1996). The researcher then read them again for references to the seven citywide goals: sustainable community development, public systems, community building, economic vitality, human and family development, environmental protection and enhancement, and public safety. The researcher identified specific indicators within each category to further define the goals (see Table 2).

Table 2. Total Responses for Neighborhood Issues and Citywide Goals

Neighborhood Issues	*Responses*	*Citywide Goals*	*Responses*
Safety	*216*	*Sustainable community development*	*62*
Crime prevention	79	Quality of life	38
Theft	32	Balanced development	12
Neighborhood watch or policing	59	In-fill development	3
Hazardous waste	3	Community center	9
Animal control	43	*Public systems*	*37*
Land use	*85*	Transportation options	9
Zoning	33	Infrastructure maintenance	28
Covenants	28	*Community building*	*100*
Property values	12	Citizen participation	65
Building construction	12	Appreciation of diversity	2
Streets	*182*	Public forums	10
Traffic management	60	Community pride	23
Parking	12	*Economic vitality*	*3*
Speed bumps or humps	37	Employment opportunities	2
Road construction and maintenance	30	Stable tax base	0
Speeding and speed limits	28	Small business growth or support	37
Lighting	15	*Human and family development*	*48*
Schools	*8*	Quality education	15
PTO/PTA	3	Recreational facilities or programs	25
Summer or after-school programs	5	Housing	5
Housing	24	Mental or physical health programs	3
Tenant-landlord relations	3	*Environmental protection*	*5*
Home maintenance	18	Water consumption	20
Homeless	1	Pollution control	18
Affordable housing	2	Energy conservation	2
Neighborhood beautification	*185*	Recycling	14
Cleanup	60	*Public safety*	*126*
Landscaping	41	Community policing	20
Recycling	15	Access to services (fire, police)	46
Refuse or garbage pickup	35	Crime prevention	30
Property maintenance	34	Neighborhood interaction	30
Noise pollution	*13*		

Note: Number of exhibits = 173.

Findings

As predicted, the analysis of key words and phrases of the 173 exhibits in the sample indicated a much greater interest on the part of neighborhood associations in issues of concern to their own communities than in issues relating to citywide goals (see Table 3). Of the six broad categories of issues that this article identified earlier as being characteristic of neighborhood associations, the issues comprising the greatest number of key words and phrases had to do with safety (30 percent), streets (25 percent), neighborhood beautification (26 percent), and land use (12 percent). With only 3 percent of the total, housing issues do not appear of major concern to neighborhoods; and the majority of these references had to do with home maintenance tasks such as repairing leaky roofs. The finding that just 1 percent of the key

Table 3. Neighborhood Issues by Category in Percentages

Neighborhood Issues	*Number of Responses*	*Percentage of Category*
Safety	*216*	*100*
Crime prevention	79	37
Theft	32	15
Neighborhood watch or policing	59	27
Hazardous waste	3	1
Animal control	43	20
Land use	*85*	*100*
Zoning	33	39
Covenants	28	33
Property values	12	14
Building construction	12	14
Streets	*182*	*100*
Traffic management	60	33
Parking	12	7
Speed bumps or humps	37	20
Road construction or maintenance	30	16
Speeding or speed limits	28	15
Lighting	15	8
Schools	*8*	*100*
PTO/PTA	3	38
Summer or after-school programs	5	63
Housing	*24*	*100*
Tenant-landlord relations	3	13
Home maintenance	18	75
Homeless	1	4
Affordable housing	2	8
Neighborhood beautification	*185*	*100*
Cleanup	60	32
Landscaping	41	22
Recycling	15	8
Refuse or garbage pickup	35	19
Property maintenance	34	20
Noise pollution	*13*	*100*

Note: Number of exhibits = 173.

words and phrases had to do with schools is surprising, but one explanation for this low percentage may be that not all neighborhoods have schools within their borders. Another possibility is that the schools themselves put out regular newsletters that keep neighborhoods apprised of their accomplishments and activities.

Some additional findings within the broad categories were the following. That almost 40 percent of the key words and phrases in the safety category address the issue of crime prevention was predictable, but that 20 percent of those references had to do with animal control was not. Although wild animals such as coyotes, snakes, and deer live within the environs of Albuquerque, almost all of the words and phrases had to do with the generally unacceptable behavior of dogs. One third of the references in the streets category, almost twice the number in any of the other five indicators, had to do with traffic management. This finding may be related to the fact that the city of Albuquerque is undergoing a two-year project to improve and expand the Big I (the intersection of Interstate 40 and Interstate 25). This major road construction project will likely have direct and indirect impacts on all neighborhoods in the Albuquerque metropolitan area, and neighborhood associations are concerned about how to manage these impacts.

One-third fewer key words or phrases in the newsletters had to do with citywide goals than with neighborhood issues

One-third fewer key words or phrases in the newsletters had to do with citywide goals than with neighborhood issues (416 versus 700; see Table 4). The citywide goal that accounted for the highest percentage of references was public safety (30 percent). The indicator that most strongly suggested the nature of this interaction was access to services (32 percent of the total in that category).

With one hundred references (24 percent), the category of community building came in second to safety. In that category the indicator that generated the most mentions was citizen participation (65 percent of the total in that category). The remaining categories generated low numbers of references. For example, only 15 percent of the total number of references fell under the category of sustainable community development, almost half of which were quality of life indicators.

The goal of environmental protection and enhancement generated a 13 percent response, in which water consumption and pollution control indicators almost tied at 37 percent and 34 percent, respectively, of the total number in that category. In a region that is characterized by chronic water shortages and air pollution from automobiles, it is predictable that these variables would generate more interest than recycling (14 percent) or energy conservation (3 percent). The category of human and family development gathered 12 percent of the total number of references. Most of the references (52 percent) within that category were to recreational and cultural programs that the city or some other local organization organized. In the category of economic vitality (9 percent), small business growth and support was the prime indicator the newsletters mentioned.

Table 4. Citywide Concerns by Category in Percentages

Citywide Goals	*Number of Responses*	*Percentage of Category*
Sustainable commercial development	*62*	*100*
Quality of life	38	61
Balanced development	12	19
In-fill development	3	5
Community center	9	15
Public systems	*37*	*100*
Transportation options	9	24
Infrastructure maintenance	28	16
Community building	*100*	*100*
Citizen participation	65	65
Appreciation of diversity	2	2
Public forums	10	10
Community pride	23	23
Economic vitality	*39*	*100*
Varied employment opportunities	2	5
Stable tax base	0	0
Small business growth or support	37	95
Human and family development	*48*	*100*
Quality education	15	31
Recreational facilities or programs	25	52
Housing	5	10
Mental or physical health programs	3	6
Environmental protection	*51*	*100*
Water consumption	20	11
Pollution control	18	33
Energy conservation	2	4
Recycling	14	26
Public safety	*126*	*100*
Community policing	20	16
Access to service (fire, police)	46	37
Crime prevention	30	24
Neighborhood interaction	30	24

Note: Number of exhibits = 173.

Many of the newsletters encouraged residents to patronize local retail establishments, and some even sold advertising space to them. The final category, public systems, generated just 8 percent of the total, most of which had to do with the reconstruction of the Big I (mentioned earlier).

Discussion

The topics that neighborhood associations in Albuquerque address in the contents of their newsletters provide limited support for the seven citywide goals that the 1998 Albuquerque Goals Forum developed. However, the neighborhood associations appear to support some goals more strongly than others. For example, although some neighborhood issues and citywide goals are mutually reinforcing

(public safety and community building), others are disconnected (economic vitality, housing, and so on). Municipal and neighborhood leaders alike need to acknowledge in which areas they are working cooperatively and in what arenas they need to make greater efforts to enhance metropolitan progress.

Neighborhood association newsletters and citywide goals both make multiple references to the importance of safety. The first-place ranking of the safety category in the list of neighborhood issues was also the highest-rated citywide goal of public safety, and by the same percentage (30 percent). One conclusion the researcher draws from these findings is that the city of Albuquerque and its neighborhoods are similarly concerned with living in safety, and that both are involved in mutually reinforcing activities to promote safer communities. Newsletters contained invitations for residents to attend association-sponsored public lectures by local police and fire officials. They also referred to neighborhoods participating in national and locally organized "night out" activities to promote safe communities. Newsletters contained phone numbers and addresses for such city services as police and fire protection, garbage collection, zoning, and animal control.

The findings of a citizens' satisfaction survey that the city of Albuquerque conducted in 1999 support the primacy of safety and crime prevention to neighborhood residents

The findings of a citizens' satisfaction survey that the city of Albuquerque conducted in 1999 support the primacy of safety and crime prevention to neighborhood residents (Research and Polling, 2000). When asked the single most serious problem facing Albuquerque, residents were five times more likely to mention the crime rate as any other issue. When taken together, over half of the citizens surveyed identified crime- and safety-related issues as being the most serious problem in Albuquerque. This concern is consistent with a uniform crime report finding that the 1999 crime index total was 7,652 per one hundred thousand inhabitants in Albuquerque, compared with the crime index total of 4,266 per one hundred thousand inhabitants nationwide (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1999). On a more positive note, residents were twice as likely to feel that the police performance in their neighborhoods had gotten better over the past year as they were to feel it had gotten worse, a finding that might indicate a comparable concern about crime on the part of city leaders.

Neighborhood associations also support the goal of community development by encouraging their residents to get involved in local decision making. Their newsletters inform residents of public forums and remind them to vote in citywide elections. Associations invite district representatives, elected to the city council on a nonpartisan ballot, to speak at neighborhood association meetings; some even have their own columns in the newsletters. Telephone numbers for elected officials as well as important municipal functions such as the zoning department routinely appear. Through their newsletters, neighborhood associations acknowledge the fact that neighborhoods are part of a larger political entity and residents should not only be

aware of how decisions made outside their borders affect them but also know the importance of participating directly in the decision-making process.

In the 1999 citizens' satisfaction survey (Research and Polling, 2000), respondents familiar with the downtown revitalization project indicated strong support for it despite the fact that it would have very little direct impact on the majority of their neighborhoods. In fact, 71 percent of those polled were in favor of the revitalization effort, compared with 12 percent of whom were not in favor. A large majority (62 percent) of residents indicated that they generally supported the city government's building an all-purpose sports and entertainment arena. Support for these two projects indicates that Albuquerque residents not only see the value of more recreational and entertainment activities but look toward city government to actively pursue making these plans a reality.

Neighborhood associations have a vested interest in increasing jobs and wages both within and outside their borders if they want to enhance their residents' quality of life

Neighborhood associations do not focus on the five other citywide goals. Together, those goals account for 54 percent of the total number of references. Neighbor residents, however, may be actively supporting city goals by speaking at zoning hearings or city council meetings without the association newsletters' mentioning these activities. Of the references in the newsletters, only 9 percent had to do with public systems; and only one-quarter of these referred to transportation options. Yet in a metropolitan area characterized by sprawl and poor public transportation, transportation is an important goal to address, especially for neighborhoods with a high percentage of low- and moderate-income residents. Neighborhood associations could serve their residents better if they encouraged the development of efficient and low-cost public transportation so that their residents could avail themselves of essential services and employment opportunities.

Only about 10 percent of the newsletter references had anything to do with the city goal of economic vitality, despite the fact that the Albuquerque metropolitan area's unemployment rate exceeds the national average and an economic growth rate that lags behind many cities of comparable size (New Mexico Department of Labor, 1999). Another factor affecting employees' salaries is an annual cost of living in Albuquerque that is higher than in the average U.S. city (First Security Corporation, 1999). Neighborhood associations have a vested interest in increasing jobs and wages both within and outside their borders if they want to enhance their residents' quality of life.

These findings were limited by the fact that not all neighborhood associations put out newsletters; and of those that do, not all submitted examples for study. Another limitation is that the content of the newsletter reflects the opinion of the editors but not necessarily of the neighbors as a group. Surveying residents, not just their leaders, about the goals identified by the 1998 Albuquerque Goals Forum, might more accurately gauge neighborhood sentiment.

Recommendations and Conclusions

Neighborhood associations could become more effective leaders in the urban decision-making process in Albuquerque while continuing to acknowledge that municipal government also bears responsibility for bringing neighborhoods into the making of public policy. The first recommendation is that neighborhood associations become more active in coalitions of neighborhood associations. This recommendation is based on the concept that neighborhood association coalitions can wield more influence than can neighborhoods acting alone (Mesch, 1996). Despite the fact that participating in coalitions may take away from time spent in neighborhood activities, neighborhood associations may realize long-term benefits from joining with others, especially on zoning and land use issues (Berry, Portney, and Thompson, 1993; Henderson and Thomas, 1981). A limitation of coalition action is that the same people are involved in them as in the neighborhood associations; as a result, developing new leaders with innovative ideas may be a problem.

In the 173 newsletters the researcher examined for this study, she found only thirty references (3 percent of the total) to coalitions of neighborhood associations. Many of these mentioned upcoming meetings, but none vigorously supported the notion of neighborhoods working together to accomplish citywide goals. One explanation for this is the fact that the OCNC historically has not provided the same level of support to coalitions as it does for neighborhood associations. Another reason might be that the neighborhood associations themselves are not aware that they share the same concerns with other similar groups and see no option but to go it alone.

A second recommendation is that neighborhood associations need to become more knowledgeable about their counterparts in the rest of the city. Rather than depending on the OCNC to keep them informed about other groups' activities, neighborhood associations need to communicate directly with these groups. This action would encourage the sharing of accurate and comprehensive information. The coalitions could take the lead in the educational initiative.

Armed with information and enthusiasm, nonprofit neighborhood associations have the potential to come together as civic leaders and have a positive impact on the formation and execution of citywide plans. One example of this synergy is the offer by the Trumbull Neighborhood Association in southeast Albuquerque to help neighborhood associations in the affluent northeast part of the city address their emerging problems with teen use of illegal drugs. Despite a poverty rate of 37 percent and an unemployment rate of 13 percent, the Trumbull neighborhood is reaching out to assist communities with far greater resources than it to deal with a problem with which it has extensive experience (Quigley, 2000).

What does this study indicate about citizen participation in this Southwest metropolis? In Arnstein's model (1969), most neighborhood

associations in twenty-first-century Albuquerque are on Step 5, placation, on the ladder of citizen participation. At this level citizens have some degree of influence, but tokenism is still apparent. For example, neighborhoods through their associations can provide input on zoning decisions, but ultimately the Albuquerque city council makes the decisions. A laudable goal for these associations would be to move up to Step 6, partnership, the level at which power is redistributed through negotiation between citizens and power holders. Achieving this level is most likely when the community has an organized power base and when that citizen group has financial resources, a situation that currently describes many neighborhood associations in Albuquerque.

Using Timney's three-part model (1998), it appears that her hybrid of citizen participation most accurately describes the relationship between the city of Albuquerque and neighborhood associations. Although neighborhood associations have a formalized process for giving input, city employees draft the recommendations that go to the city council for consideration. Although this hybrid model is more responsive than the passive model, it is limited because ultimate administrative control can restrict the possibilities for greater impact by the people.

Although neighborhood associations have a formalized process for giving input, city employees draft the recommendations that go to the city council for consideration

This analysis of the content of neighborhood association newsletters in Albuquerque, New Mexico, quantifies the degree to which these nonprofit organizations support specific citywide goals. The findings suggest that Albuquerque neighborhood associations support several of these goals to a modest degree but support others less so. Although this study does not identify the goals, neighborhoods likely have their own goals for development that do not appear as citywide goals. Supporting citywide goals makes good civic sense, but neighborhood association leaders need to encourage their members to develop their own goals and actively solicit support for them from appointed and elected municipal officials who can address those goals in the next round of city goal setting.

KAREN N. KING is a faculty member in the School of Administration at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. Her research interests include nonprofit management, grassroots organizations, and public sector human resource management.

References

Albuquerque, New Mexico. "Chapter 14: Zoning, Planning and Building, Article 8: Commissions, Councils, Agencies and Other Bodies, Part 2: Neighborhood Association Recognition" (§14-8-2-1 through §14-8-2-7). *Code of Ordinances,* 1987.

Albuquerque Statistics. "Stats and Facts." [http://www.metro100.com/relocation/stats.htr]. 1999.

Arnstein, S. R. "A Ladder of Citizen Participation." *Journal of the American Institute of Planners,* 1969, *35* (4), 216–224.
Berry, J. M., Portney, K. E., and Thompson, K. *The Rebirth of Urban Democracy.* Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1993.
Carillo, C. *Albuquerque South Valley Area Community Assessment.* Santa Fe, N.M.: Department of Health, 1993.
Community Training and Assistance Center. *Albuquerque Office of Neighborhood Coordination: Performance Assessment.* Boston: Community Training and Assistance Center, 1997.
Daykin, D. S. "The Limits to Neighborhood Power: Progressive Politics and Local Control in Santa Monica." In S. Cummings (ed.), *Business Elites and Urban Development.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988.
Federal Bureau of Investigation. "Index of Crime by Metropolitan Statistical Area, 1999." [http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius_02/xl/02tb/06.xls]. 1999.
First Security Corporation. "New Mexico's Economy: 1999 Preview." [http://205.215.207.192/outlook_nm.htm]. 1999.
Guest, A. M., and Oropesa, R. S. "Informal Social Ties and Political Activity in the Metropolis." *Urban Affairs Quarterly,* 1986, *21* (4), 550–574.
Hasson, S., and Ley, D. "Neighborhood Organizations, the Welfare State, and Citizenship Rights." *Urban Affairs Review,* 1997, *33* (1), 28–58.
Henderson, P., and Thomas, D. "Federations of Community Groups: The Benefits and Dangers." *Community Development Journal,* 1981, *16* (2), 98–105.
Herson, L.J.R., and Borland, J. M. *The Urban Web: Politics, Policy, and Theory.* Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1990.
Hosti, O. R. *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences.* Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1969.
Jeffres, L. W., and Dobos, J. "Communication and Neighborhood Mobilization." *Urban Affairs Quarterly,* 1984, *20* (1), 97–112.
Mesch, G. S. "The Effect of Environmental Concerns and Governmental Incentives on Organized Action in Local Areas." *Urban Affairs Review,* 1996, *31* (3), 346–366.
Mesch, G. S., and Schwirian, K. P. "The Effectiveness of Neighborhood Collective Action." *Social Problems,* 1996, *43* (4), 467–483.
New Mexico Department of Labor. "New Mexico/Albuquerque Labor Force Estimates." [http://www3.state.nm.us/dol/dol_lfe.htm]. 1999.
Oropesa, R. S. "The Social and Political Foundations of Effective Neighborhood Associations." *Social Science Quarterly,* 1989, *70* (3), 723–743.
Oropesa, R. S. "Social Structure, Social Solidarity, and Involvement in Neighborhood Improvement Associations." *Sociological Inquiry,* 1992, *62* (1), 107–118.

Oropesa, R. S. "The Ironies of Human Resource Mobilization by Neighborhood Associations." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly,* 1995, *24* (3), 235–252.

Peterson, P. E. *City Limits.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

Price, V. B. *A City at the End of the World.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992.

Quigley, W. "Prescription for Better Health Can Begin with a Paycheck." *Albuquerque Journal,* Jan. 1, 2000, Business Outlook, p. 3.

Research and Polling, Inc. *Citizens' Perceptions of Community Conditions: Executive Summary.* Albuquerque, N. M.: City of Albuquerque, 2000.

Rich, R. C. "A Political-Economy Approach to the Study of Neighborhood Organizations." *American Journal of Political Science,* 1980, *24* (4), 559–592.

Rusk, D. *Cities Without Suburbs.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

Shared Vision, Inc. "Recommended Five-Year Goals for the City of Albuquerque." *Report to the Mayor and the City Council on the Albuquerque Goals Forum.* Albuquerque, N. M.: Shared Vision, 1998.

Smith, D. H. *Grassroots Associations.* Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2000.

Taub, R. P., and others. "Urban Voluntary Associations, Locality Based and Externally Induced." *American Journal of Sociology,* 1977, *83* (2), 425–442.

Timney, M. M. "Overcoming Administrative Barriers to Citizen Participation." In C. S. King and C. Stivers (eds.), *Government Is Us: Public Administration in an Anti-Government Era.* Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1998.

Yates, D. *The Ungovernable City: The Politics of Urban Problems and Policy Making.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1977.